

### **Junior High Girls: An Awkward Phase and Bullying**

Jr high is such an awkward phase. I remember how dramatic each little thing seemed. Looking from the outside now, I can see how small the "tragedies" actually are. However, this week, my daughter was stuck in between two bickering girls.

Apparently, there is a very sweet and shy girl who has a very giving heart--we'll call her Susie--that must intimidate this other little girl. We'll call her Jenny. My daughter is very good friends with Susie and is friends with Jenny, as well.

She has known that Susie and Jenny weren't great friends, but something happened this week to flip a switch. Jenny kept talking about Susie behind her back--and in front of her.

Tuesday afternoon, Jenny called and left a message with my daughter saying, "If this is [my daughter], 'Hi.' If this is Susie, 'Bye 'cuz I don't want to talk to you.".

My daughter ignored the message.

Then shortly after that, another message. "Hi, [my daughter]. I'm not sure if you told Susie to call me or not, but if you did can you tell her to not call me ever again? 'Cuz I don't want to hear her voice. If you didn't tell her to call me then, 'Hi.'"

I encouraged my daughter to again ignore the message and to be careful. I warned her that Jenny would probably try to manipulate her into getting into the middle of their bickering. She needed to be kind to Jenny, but to know that Jenny was not a true friend and was not trustworthy.

I told my daughter that if Jenny would talk about Susie behind her back, then she would most likely talk about everyone else behind their backs, too. My daughter agreed.

In my head I was thinking at how this could very easily end up in legitimate bullying and I wasn't quite sure what to do about it. My daughter wanted to tell Susie about the call, but I encouraged her not to as I thought that would just escalate the situation. I'm not sure if that was the right call or not, but I had to go with my gut.

My daughter and I talked about reasons why Jenny would be doing this. It was nice to hear my daughter verbalize that she understands that Jenny is most likely intimidated by Susie and most likely has a low self-esteem.

We talked about reasons why Jenny would have an unnecessary low self esteem.

My daughter decided to continue to stay out of their scuffle and not get dragged in, but she also decided to continue being kind to Jenny. (Not brown-nosing, but kind in a way that would enhance Jenny's own self worth.)

If only Jenny's parents were paying closer attention to her. It's unfortunate that Jenny feels the need to derive negative attention by "bullying" herself into a position of "influence." Hopefully she'll realize one day that respect is earned, not demanded.